

FOREIGN SHORTFALLS IN IRAQ AID PLEDGES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House and to the American people a disturbing situation involving a shortfall in Iraq aid pledges. This morning during a hearing of the House Armed Services Committee, I also brought this issue to the attention of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and Admiral Michael Mullen.

On January 30, 2008, USA Today reported that allied countries have paid only \$2.5 million of the more than \$15.8 billion they pledged to help rebuild Iraq. The article further reports: "The biggest shortfalls in pledges by 41 donor countries are from Iraq's oil-rich neighbors and U.S. allies, namely Saudi Arabia and Kuwait."

Madam Speaker, it is extremely troubling that some of the countries that may benefit most from a secure and stable Iraq, particularly its neighbors in the region, are not providing the money they pledged to help achieve that goal.

The United States, on the other hand, has already spent \$29 billion to help rebuild Iraq, and Congress has approved an additional \$16.5 billion. And unlike the United States, which is borrowing money from foreign governments to pay its bills, many of Iraq's neighbors are running record surpluses because of profits their governments receive from their national oil companies.

In 2001 a gallon of gasoline cost Americans \$1.42. Today that same gallon costs us \$3.36. In 2001 oil was \$28 per barrel. Today that same barrel is almost \$114. Many of the countries who are falling short on their pledges to Iraq are withholding oil production and causing gas prices to rise on the American consumer. These countries have the economic resources to meet their commitments to Iraq.

Madam Speaker, in a letter on February 8 of this year, I expressed these concerns to Secretary Rice. Since then I received a response from the Department of State. They say they share my concern that for some countries the pace of their assistance to Iraq has been too slow. The State Department also indicates that top officials continue to urge their government to follow through on their pledges, and with the increased successes, the department is working through multilateral forums to encourage donors to meet their pledges.

During this morning's hearing, Secretary Rice also pledged that she will redouble her efforts to encourage allies in the region to pay their way in Iraq. Madam Speaker, out of fairness to the American taxpayer, I am hopeful that

these efforts will be successful. It is time for Arab countries that are running surpluses to start paying their share of the bills in Iraq.

Madam Speaker, I have said many times and said it today at the hearing that it's our men and women who are in Iraq losing their legs, being paralyzed for the rest of their life, and losing their life for this country. It is the least that these Arab countries can do that are making dollars every time we put gas in our cars. It is time that they meet their obligation to fulfill the \$15.8 billion that they pledged to help rebuild Iraq.

With that, Madam Speaker, before I close, I ask God to continue to bless our men and women in uniform, and I ask God to continue to bless America.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5715, ENSURING CONTINUED ACCESS TO STUDENT LOAN ACT OF 2008

Ms. CASTOR, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 110-590) on the resolution (H. Res. 1107) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5715) to ensure continued availability of access to the Federal student loan program for students and families, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LOEBSACK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Madam Speaker, this week is Week of the Young Child, and I stand before you and my colleagues this evening to call for the full funding of Head Start, our Nation's premier early education program, and for Child Care and Development Block Grants.

I understand firsthand how important Head Start and subsidized child care programs are for low-income working families. I grew up in poverty, and I had a single mother who suffered from mental illness. I relied on support from my extended family, community, and friends. And as a result of the support that I received, I was able to focus on school, work hard, and achieve the American Dream. However, not all children are fortunate enough to have this sort of support system outside of their homes, and even with this additional support, many of Iowa's children could benefit from attending Head Start. Additionally, many hard-

working, low-income parents could more easily push their families out of poverty if provided access to affordable and reliable child care. This is why it is critical that we properly fund Head Start and Child Care and Development Block Grants so we can expand enrollment and provide greater support to working families and opportunity to our Nation's children.

For years we have been provided with statistics proving the benefits of Head Start and affordable child care. We know that children enrolled in Head Start will excel academically, have fewer health problems, and adapt better both socially and emotionally.

However, to appreciate fully the benefits, Madam Speaker, one simply has to speak with the parents of these outstanding young students. In Iowa's Second District, which I am proud to represent, I have been lucky enough to visit a number of Head Start locations, and I have received letters from the parents of a number of these students. One of these letters was from Trina Thompson, a single, hardworking parent of two. Her youngest child attends Head Start in Iowa City, where she shared with me that "The staff and the program itself at Head Start are invaluable to my family and many others. It is a well-run program that has been vitally beneficial to my daughter and my family." Ms. Thompson went on to say, "I can go to work every day secure in the knowledge that my daughter is safe in a positive learning environment with amazing people." Ms. Thompson is not alone in her praise of these critical programs and the outstanding educators and child care providers.

The photo behind me today is a photo of one of these exceptional providers. Kelly Mathews of Iowa City is pictured here with children at the child care center she runs in Iowa. Ms. Mathews works 50 hours a week with the children at this center. Then she spends additional time filling out paperwork, completing continuing education credits, shopping for supplies, and creating a challenging and exciting curriculum for the children under her care. Ms. Mathews does all this for one clear reason: "to change the world." But we know this goal isn't easy, especially when Ms. Mathews is receiving a very modest salary with no benefits and no paid time off. We must do better for Ms. Mathews, better for all the child care providers and Head Start teachers, better for the children in Iowa and across the country, and better for hard-working families.

Unfortunately, this year the President failed to stand up for our country's children. He failed to prioritize their needs, forgetting that these children are the key to our country's future success. This year the President proposes flat funding for child care that will cause 200,000 children to lose access to child care assistance by 2009. The administration also acknowledges that fewer children will be served in